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4 APR 1957

The Honorable Stuart Symington
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Symington:

My letter of 18 March 1957 apparently crossed yours of the same date, and I believe I have already dealt with all but the last two paragraphs of your letter.

Referring to the last two paragraphs of your letter, the agreed estimates of the intelligence community during recent years have not underestimated Russian aircraft production in all other cases. In 1953, for example, a Soviet aircraft then in the prototype stage was included in estimated future production. Subsequently, information was developed that this aircraft was not put into production and it was then dropped from the new estimate. In certain other instances, later evidence has caused an upward revision in national intelligence estimates.

Responsible opinion differs as to whether intelligence has overestimated or underestimated Soviet strength in recent years. I note that in testimony before your Subcommittee last June, Admiral Radford voiced the opinion that intelligence normally overestimates Communist capabilities. The complexities of estimating on the wide scope of Soviet programs and strengths are such that, from time to time, predictions regarding specific Soviet programs must be modified in the light of new evidence. On balance, however, I do not believe that in recent years national intelligence estimates have shown any consistent tendency either to overestimate or to underestimate the significant trends in Soviet capabilities.

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(EXECUTIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM)

As I indicated in my letter of 18 March, we constantly review our estimates in the light of up-to-date intelligence, and there is no way of predicting the direction or degree of change which this new information will dictate. I can assure you that national intelligence estimates will continue to reflect objective judgments based on available evidence.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

Allen W. Dulles
Director

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United States Senate
 COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

March 18, 1957

9-1665

Honorable Allen W. Dulles
 Director of Central Intelligence
 2430 E Street
 Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Director:

For some reason the Intelligence revision about Russian long-range bombers which came to our Subcommittee from your Department last November has suddenly been given a lot of publicity in the press.

This naturally is a surprise, especially as it was all known prior to the issuance of our recent report on air-power -- and prior to the submission of the 1958 military budget to the Congress.

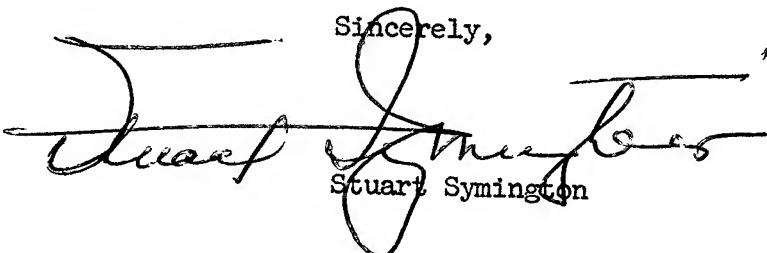
As I understood our conversation yesterday, this your revised estimate is based on acquired knowledge about production bugs in the Russian production of these bombers -- bugs comparable to those which recently held up so much production of our B-52's.

I noted that these production lags have not in your opinion reduced the number of long-range bombers the Russians plan to build; and understand they have not changed our concept of the number of such bombers they will have in operational units.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the only case, at least in recent years, where CIA estimates of Russian production have turned out to be more than they later actually produced.

In all other cases -viz. plane types - Russian production exceeded the previous estimates. If that is not right, please let me know the cases in question.

Sincerely,



Stuart Symington

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X-32P**TUSCON (Ariz.) STAR**

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Front Page Edit Page Other Page

Date: MAR. 9, 1957

'A 900-Million-Dollar Bobble'

Approximately a year ago, when the appropriations committees of Congress were at work on the federal budget, a well-organized publicity campaign was launched, the theme of which was that the Soviet Union was building its new intercontinental bombers so fast that by 1959 Russia could deliver a devastating attack on the United States.

The campaign began with the usual leaks to friendly columnists like Joseph and Stewart Alsop, who solemnly predicted calamity. In due time, Sen. W. Stuart Symington of Missouri, who has become the unofficial spokesman for the Air Force, raised the tempo of his continuous warnings and persuaded his congressional colleagues to make an investigation. Under the chairmanship of the distinguished senator, and with TV cameras dazzling the hearing room, the investigation got under way with a burst of publicity.

The committee's recommendations could have been written in advance, and without taking a word of testimony. Nothing new was disclosed, although the country was reassured that American intelligence had discovered this newest threat from the Soviet Union.

The Star was one of the few newspapers in America to challenge the accuracy of the statements of top officers of the Air Force. The Star explained that air power is planes plus bases, and that with our 2,000 B47's the low-but steady production of the new B52's would enable the United States to retaliate massively to any attack, in 1959 or any previous year. The Star questioned the wisdom of accelerating unduly the production rate of B52's, because they soon would become obsolete.

Congress voted \$900 million to provide for Air Force expansion, which President Eisenhower himself had opposed.

Now comes a story in the March 8 issue of U. S. News and World Report, headed, "A 900-million-dollar Bobble," which explains:

"The story of a major bobble in U. S. intelligence estimates — one that caused Congress to appropriate an extra 900 million dollars last year — is starting to leak out now.

"Just a year ago, a secret intelligence report was given to a committee of Congress concerning Russia's strength in long-range air power. The Russians, according to 'leaked' reports, were said to have more than 100 Bison heavy bombers, far surpassing the numbers the U. S. had of its comparable jet bomber, the B52.

"A furor ensued in Congress, and in the press. Congress grew concerned over an apparent Russian lead in a vital defense field. As a direct result of that concern, nearly a billion dollars was added to the requested Air Force budget, with the understanding that most of it would be spent to speed the output of B52 bombers.

"Now, however, top defense officials are disclosing to Congress that the intelligence estimate of a year ago has been found to be far too high. Instead of more than 100 superbombers, the indications seem to be that Russians had only about 50, with U. S. strength in heavy bombers out ahead.

"It is all raising serious questions

chussets, during the hearings.

"Senator Saltonstall: Am I correct General, in saying that this information which you have given us, as General McConnell (Maj. Gen. John P. McConnell) has stated, has been correlated with the CIA so that the figures that they gave us the other day, which were quite extensive, are the same as your figures here?"

"General LeMay: That is correct, yes, sir."

"Senator Saltonstall: Your intelligence has been co-ordinated?"

"General LeMay: Yes, sir."

"It was at this hearing that intelligence figures on the Soviet Bison were disclosed, off the record. In the published record, however, a top-level Air Force general gave us the conclusion:

"This shows that in accordance with presently programmed production schedules of the B52, and for the Russian Bison and Bear, in 1959 they (the Russians) will have approximately twice the number of heavy bombers that the United States Air Force will have."

"Reversal: Now this is all changed:

"Air Force Secretary Donald Quarles told the Senate Armed Services Committee last week that: '... while, at one time, Bisons appeared to lead B52s in production, the present indications are that B52s are substantially ahead in numbers as well as quality and there is every prospect that they will remain so.'

"Gen. Nathan F. Twining, Air Force chief of staff, states flatly that the current estimate of present strength of Russia's heavy-bomber force is lower than the Air Force estimate for this same period made a year ago."

Those words tell a self-evident story. Inexcusably mistaken estimates made by top officers of the Air Force of their own intelligence, and shocking gullibility on the part of Senator Symington and his congressional colleagues.

The probabilities are that so-called intelligence originated in the minds of some "armament spenders" who, on the advice of their well-paid public relations advisers in New York, deliberately planted this misinformation on the Air Force officials and Senator Symington as a way of frightening the American people and members of Congress into spending the extra \$900 million.